

Secretary General's Report

Dear All,

I do hope that this foreword to the September Newsletter finds you and your families well as everyone around the world continues the battle against the COVID-19 pandemic. These are very difficult times for the marine industry and in an unprecedented show of strength, Ship Owners, Unions and Shipmaster Organisations are all working together to try and get Nations to recognise mariners as key workers and to get crew changes underway effectively. We have now been working constantly at this for over five months and yet we seem to have made little progress. Crew changes have increased, but they are at less than 40% of the average monthly rate and every time we get a new nation signed up to allow crew changes, there seems to be another spike in cases and they close down again. We estimate that there are more than 300,000 mariners who now desperately need to be relieved and the same number ashore desperate to get back to sea to earn some money for their families.

We all remain very concerned about levels of fatigue at sea especially now so many mariners have been at sea in excess of the eleven months allowed by the International Labour Organization's Maritime Labour Convention, some have even been at sea in excess of seventeen months and this is an enormous risk to safety. I therefore wish to draw your attention, yet again, to the letter IFSMA sent to all shipmasters at the beginning of June reminding them of their obligations under international regulations and that if they were concerned about the safety of their crew or their ship, then they had the right to refuse to sail. Indeed there is an obligation to do so and in this event mariner unions and the ITF will be right behind you. Please keep IFSMA informed if you are in any doubt or need advice. This might just be what is required to jolt the nations out of their inward looking inaction.

You will be pleased to hear that finally the IMO in London will resume meetings in the middle of September although this will be by video conferencing until at least the end of 2020. Nevertheless, it will enable us to start to pressure national administrations and force them to listen to our plight. I will once again keep you informed on any progress we make.

Please rest assured that we and the Marine Industry Advisory Group, of which IFSMA is part, and all of the UN Agencies are doing all we can to get these travel restrictions lifted.

Keep well and stay safe.

To read full Newsletter press on link: [Newsletter 33](#)